

Media Release

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Amanda Rodriguez, President of Petropolis Inc., of Athens, Is Georgia's 2005 Young Entrepreneur of the Year *--Rodriguez Started her Company in 2001 at Age 24--*

Amanda D. Rodriguez, who started her full-service pet care business as a recent graduate of the University of Georgia, was selected the 2005 Young Entrepreneur of the Year by the U.S. Small Business Administration.

Rodriguez, who has provided jobs for over a dozen people, received her statewide award yesterday from Terri L. Denison, SBA Georgia District Director. The award was presented at a luncheon hosted by the Georgia Lenders Quality Circle and held at the Commerce Club in Atlanta. Rodriguez was nominated for her award by the University of Georgia Small Business Development Center in Athens.

Her business, Petropolis Inc., offers a full range of pet care services from its innovative cage-free “doggie day-care” and over-night boarding to self-serve, or full service, dog bathing and grooming facilities. There is also a pet boutique offering a wide variety of products and pet themed gift items. In addition, Petropolis offers dog obedience classes using the latest training techniques.



Rodriguez's business has been profitable since its second year and with expanding revenues, she has been able to increase her employment over the past several years.

Before she started her company in 2001, Rodriguez took a “How to Start a Business” class at the University of Georgia Small Business Development Center in Athens. She also met with an SBDC business consultant to develop a business plan. After being turned down by one bank, Rodriguez went to Bank of America, which liked her business plan and her concept for a pet care business. The bank approved an SBA guaranteed loan of \$41,000 to help get her business going.

Petropolis opened with 4,875 square feet of space and added additional space in the second year. The business now needs more room and Rodriguez is working with her SBDC consultant on a loan proposal to buy land and build her own building in the near future.

Besides turning her startup into a successful business, Rodriguez has managed to give back to her community. She formed “Helping Paws Rescue,” a non-profit animal rescue organization that literally

saves animals just hours before they are scheduled to be euthanized by the local pound. Over 240 animals have been saved and placed with permanent owners.

Moreover, she has sponsored other organizations' programs including events by Athens Canine Rescue. She hosts the fund raising events at her business and allows the organization to use her dog wash facility at no charge.

Rodriguez is a native of Riverdale, Georgia. As a youngster, she was drawn to her current career while doing obedience training and competition with her first pet, a Dalmatian named Lacey. At the University of Georgia, she decided that working with animals would be her future endeavor. During college, Rodriguez established a small business called "Home Alone Pet Care." She would tend to animals in their home or at hers while their owners were away.

Rodriguez pursued her degree in Psychology at Georgia, taking all the classes she could find relating to animal cognition and behavior. She had planned to leave Athens after college. But as Rodriguez puts it, "there is such an animal loving community here."

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